TOWN OF STONY PLAIN

DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE DESIGN GUIDELINES

BUILDING FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. AN IDENTIFIABLE COMMUNITY IMAGE 3

III. DESIGN HERITAGE 4

IV. DESIGN GUIDELINES 6

1.0 STREETSCAPE CONTINUITY GUIDELINES 6

1.1 Solids and Spaces 6
1.2 Horizontal and Vertical Alignments 7
1.3 Building Form and Massing 7

2.0 GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS 10

2.1 Storefront Components 10
2.2 Building Facade Improvements 10
2.3 Building Materials 11
2.4 Detailing 11
2.5 Storefront Windows, Entrances and Doors 12
2.6 Side and Rear Walls 13
2.7 Exterior Wall Murals 13
2.8 Finishes and Maintenance 14
2.9 New and Infill Construction 14

3.0 SIGNAGE GUIDELINES 15

3.1 Sign Selection and Placement 16
3.2 Sign Design 17

GLOSSARY 19

BIBLIOGRAPHY 25

I. INTRODUCTION

Like most towns located within a larger metropolitan area, Stony Plain's Downtown has faced increasing competition from regional and local shopping malls located outside its traditional boundaries. Concern about the future prospects of the Downtown and its ability to act as a strong community centre, prompted the Town of Stony Plain to engage the Vancouver firm of Thompson, Berwick, Pratt and Partners, to carry out an assessment of the Downtown's role within the larger community and provide direction as to its future development.

Main street looking south, circa 1910
Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta

The Stony Plain Downtown Revitalization Study (SPDRS) was completed in November, 1983 and adopted by Town Council. The study considered a number of pertinent factors - the Town's developmental history, existing physical character, infrastructure, present development trends, local attitudes and priorities and developed possible implementation strategies. The results of the SPDRS indicated that Stony Plain's historic Downtown area remains a vital part of the Town and that residents of Stony Plain favour its continuance as the strong social, cultural and economic focus of the Town and local region. There has been a recognition that Downtown areas have traditionally acted as the heart of a community, and as such, have been a major contributor to a community's overall sense of identity.

The successful functioning of a downtown area is dependent on many factors. Sound business practice and a good retail mix are essential, but it is also realized that an attractive, comfortable and safe downtown environment is an important factor. In recent years, the Town of Stony Plain has carried out public sector streetscape improvements in strategic parts of the Downtown. The process has continued to where the next step must involve private sector investment in building facade improvements.

Factors such as age, neglect, poor signage, inappropriate or substandard remodelling and deterioration lead to a look which detracts from a commercial area and often the businesses themselves. Building facades, when individually improved, can collectively have a major positive impact on the appearance of the Downtown. The renovation approach, as suggested in the SPDRS, usually will involve the retention of a building's original design features. Along with improved aesthetics, this approach will strengthen the Town's image and sense of community while allowing residents and visitors, alike, to gain an understanding of the Town's developmental history.

As a follow-up to the SPDRS, the Town of Stony Plain requested that the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission assist the Town in developing design guidelines, that focus on building facade enhancement and new infill building design, for the commercial buildings located in the Downtown.

The design guidelines contained in this report have been developed to do the following:

- offer direction to design approaches that the Town of Stony Plain would like to encourage and those that it would like to discourage;
- maintain and strengthen the character of the traditional Downtown area;
- protect the value of public and private investment which could be threatened by substandard design and/or poor maintenance;
- improve the quality of new development;
- preserve the integrity of the traditional Main Street area by discouraging new construction that suggests "false history";
- provide a consistent and rational basis for decisions of the Municipal Planning Commission with regard to signage, renovation of existing buildings and new development;
- assist property owners, designers and contractors with preliminary design decisions;
- increase public awareness of design issues and options and the advantages of consulting design professionals.

Design guidelines cannot limit new development or regulate the location of development. They address only the visual impact of development and cannot control the layout or use of interior space. They apply only to the visible exterior portions of a building. Furthermore design guidelines **cannot**:

- serve the same legal purpose as a design review bylaw. Guidelines are not laws but do provide, through the use of design ideas and illustrations, design standards deemed to be desirable by the Town.
- ensure that all new development will be compatible with existing development. Decisions by the people of Stony Plain regarding the application of the design guidelines will determine final results. Guidelines can help to avoid the worst sorts of insensitive design, but cannot guarantee the best kinds of design.[1]

The design guidelines presented here will be in three sections. First, the Streetscape Continuity Guidelines deal with the overall appearance of the street and blocks of buildings. The intent is to contribute visual unity and harmony to the Downtown area but to do so while encouraging interest and allowing for innovative design. Instances of "welcome contrast", such as the Shikaoi Gardens, will be accommodated by these guidelines.

Secondly, Guidelines for Individual Buildings, deal with architectural issues that relate to the individual buildings that compose the Downtown. Use of building materials, colour schemes, architectural detailing etc. will be dealt with. While the design approach recommended in this report is that of "renovation" to existing buildings, this section also includes guidelines for new and infill construction which will enhance the existing development in the Downtown.

The third section, Signage Guidelines, is concerned with the design and application of signs to commercial building facades in the Downtown. In the case of downtown Stony Plain this is of particular importance. There are a number of buildings in the Downtown where the application of sensitively located, well designed signage would, in itself, dramatically improve a building's appearance.

These Guidelines aim at achieving a high quality downtown environment by outlining the components of good commercial facade design. They must be useful to both the public and private sectors for making design decisions that will affect the look of existing and new infill buildings. Eventually these guidelines, or some similar version, could achieve regulatory status as a means of ensuring effective use.

[1]Cardston Main Street Project, Design Guidlines, 1990, Page 6.

II. AN IDENTIFIABLE COMMUNITY IMAGE

The Municipal Census Highlights Report - Town of Stony Plain, (1990)[2] points out that a majority of the Stony Plain residents employed full time or part-time are employed outside the Town, with the largest portion commuting to the City of Edmonton to work. The Town's concern about its evolving role as a dormitory community to the City of Edmonton, rather than growing in a more balanced manner that would maintain and strengthen a unique sense of community identity, is well founded.

As part of maintaining and reinforcing the vitality of the Downtown, the SPDRS recommended a Cultural Heritage thematic approach. Council adopted this theme based on the Towns's role as an agricultural service centre to a district characterized by a rich multicultural settlement history and a thriving artistic and handicrafts tradition. As part of a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization the following steps have been taken:

Christmas decoration attached to "Heritage Style" streetlamp
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

1.Organization

At the organizational level, Council passed a bylaw establishing the Downtown Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) in late 1986. This organization allows business people, within a designated commercial area, to elect a Board which administers funds for the improvement and promotion of the Downtown. The BRZ Board is composed of business people within the designated area and one or more members of Council. This ensures cooperation between the business community and Council.

Activities of the Stony Plain Downtown BRZ Board have included the scheduling of a series of sales events, the encouragement of new economic development and participation in design enhancement initiatives. The BRZ Board has adopted a "Heart of the Town" logo as a promotional and marketing tool for the Downtown.

2.Promotion and Marketing

A broad array of promotional activities have been scheduled in the Downtown. These cultural and social events include Heritage Days, Farmer Days, the Christmas Town Celebration and Midnight Madness and are designed to achieve retail and service economic spin-offs. These, along with other events, are scheduled throughout the year and are based on the Cultural Heritage Theme. They are organized and sponsored by the Town, the BRZ Board, various service clubs and other community groups and organizations. The BRZ Board has encouraged Downtown businesses to standardize shopping hours and adopt other good business practices.

3.Design Enhancement

The Town of Stony Plain, BRZ Board and businesses and property owners have worked together to carry out Downtown streetscape improvements which include new sidewalks, landscape treatment, heritage-style street furniture and hardware

[2]E.M.R.P.C., Information Services Branch, Municipal Census Highlights Report, Town of Stony Plain, Edmonton, 1990

and ornate streetlamps. Two ambitious urban design initiatives that stand out are the application of exterior wall murals at strategic locations in the Downtown and the development of the Shikaoi Gardens Park immediately east of the Civic Building. The Town administration has instituted a maintenance programme to service these improvements.

4.Economic Development

The Town Administration and BRZ Board have taken an aggressive approach towards the establishment of new businesses and industry in the Town. Commercial space in the Downtown, is, at this time, characterized by a high occupancy rate, with only two storefront vacancies on Main Street. Outside the Downtown, the Wolf Winery, located adjacent to Highway 16, is a prominent sign of the Town's success in the area of economic diversification.

The initiatives described above have produced a growing perception that Stony Plain's Downtown Area possesses a unique "sense of place" which is contributing to a positive overall community image. The work accomplished has been ambitious for a community the size of Stony Plain, but continuing detailed work is necessary to attain the environmental quality required if the Downtown is to remain the business, social and cultural focus of this growing community.

III. DESIGN HERITAGE

As in the case of many Alberta communities, few of the original buildings in the Downtown remain due to fire or redevelopment pressures. When Stony Plain was incorporated as a Town in 1908, it contained two hotels of substantial construction, a bank, and a variety of retail and service establishments oriented to servicing the needs of the surrounding developing agricultural district. The Bismark Hotel, renamed the Royal Hotel in 1911, was a three storey, gable roofed structure, featuring a prominent corner tower. These buildings were of wood frame construction featuring a clapboard "Boomtown" facade style which still is in evidence in the Downtown area.

Royal Hotel (formerly the Bismark Hotel) Circa 1913
Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta

Over the years, new architectural styles, popular at the time of construction, made their appearance on buildings along Stony Plain's Main Street. These were constructed of wood, brick, field stone and stucco. The brick-clad Professional Building is a good example of Edwardian Classical Revival Architecture, popular in Western Canada from 1910 to 1920. This building would likely have been accompanied by others of the same style if it were not for the advent of the Great Depression and World War II which more or less halted building development across the country for a good number of years to come.

During the mid-1930s and through the 1940s building construction resumed, but in a much more modest form than during the first two decades of the century. Often this construction consisted of additions or new facades applied to existing buildings. These facade treatments sometimes featured the Streamline Moderne Style of architecture, utilizing stucco exterior surfaces. The General Tire and Automotive Building, its facade characterized by a smooth stucco surface and rounded corner, is an excellent example of an addition featuring this style of architecture applied to an older structure.

Facade modification has continued up to the present with metal, vinyl and other cladding materials making their appearance on Downtown buildings. Today, the majority of buildings along Main Street have had their original facades altered, as building owners have attempted to update the image of their buildings and businesses. Such modifications have often compromised a building's original facade in a manner that has resulted in the hiding or removal of its best architectural features. In some cases the effects of a series of facade modifications have left building facades in, what might be described as, a state of aesthetic confusion.

In Stony Plain, the majority of buildings in the Downtown are older, one and two storey structures. Most offer a street orientation with a centred entrance and large display windows. These one and two storey buildings mainly feature thirty foot frontages creating a similarity in scale. This is a major unifying characteristic of the Downtown area. Collectively, these buildings create the Downtown's pedestrian orientation and strong "sense of place". The maintenance of the existing scale and proportions is important. A number of newer buildings have been constructed in the Downtown during the 1970s and 80s. Some are more successful than others in respecting the predominate scale that characterizes the downtown. The objective is to achieve a design approach based on a sense of "unity" rather than a rigid thematic concept. Attention to detail and quality would be stressed in any design enhancement work so that buildings would be upgraded as individual, unique elements working together to create a cohesive whole.

Good marketing practice has long recognized that attractive building facades, or storefronts promote commercial success.

Main street looking north (1991)
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

The "renovation" approach to facade improvement, being based on improving the appearance of existing buildings, is well suited to Stony Plain's Downtown area. A modern building should be upgraded as a better modern building, a heritage building as a better heritage building, etc. This approach is practical and allows for a range of improvements -from simple repainting, all the way to elaborate "heritage quality" restorations.

There will be circumstances where the design approach may differ from that of "renovation" but generally, improvements should be based on a building's original architectural character, and undertaken in a manner that will accommodate current commercial uses. Features that enhance should be retained while those that cover up and/or detract should be removed.

The public environment improvements described earlier have had a notably positive impact on the Downtown area which is now receiving regional and Provincial recognition. These improvements represent a significant investment of public funds. Improvements to individual buildings in the Downtown area should be a priority and initiatives by the private sector strongly encouraged. High quality design standards must be established to guide improvements to existing structures, as well as new infill development to help provide a high quality downtown environment.

In accordance with the discussion above, the following design guidelines are oriented toward maintaining and strengthening the Town of Stony Plain's "sense of community" through the provision of a uniquely attractive Downtown atmosphere which can increase community pride and commercial success.

IV. DESIGN GUIDELINES

1.0 STREETSCAPE CONTINUITY GUIDELINES

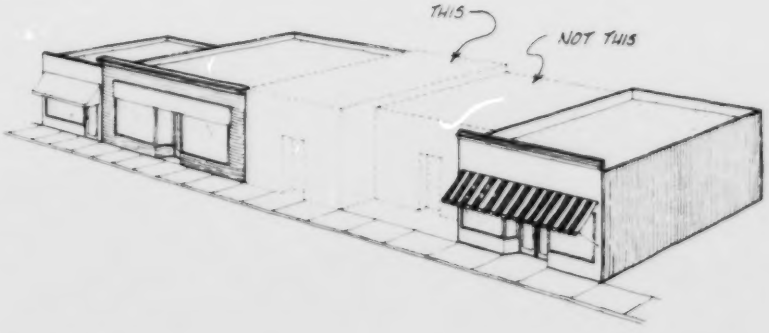
1.1 Solids and Spaces

With visual continuity the eye is led from building to building along the street. On Stony Plain's Main Street the majority of buildings are constructed to the property line and sidewalk. A number of buildings feature minor setbacks or have vacant space separating them from neighbouring buildings. The majority of shop entrances are located at approximately 30 foot intervals, with some cases of separate, dual entrances, located at the centre or to either side of a facade.

Objective: *To develop a sense of enclosure and containment by maintaining continuous development along both sides of the street to facilitate retail continuity.*

Recommended Approach

1.1.1 Maintain the established positioning and relationship of buildings to the street (e.g. build to front property line or sidewalk).



1.1.2 Where vacant lots, parking lots or deep setbacks create spaces, use fencing, landscaping, walls, etc. to visually extend the building line and thus close the gap.

1.1.3 If a vacant space or deep setback does exist it can be utilized to emphasize significant elements in the streetscape (e.g. Shikaoi Gardens, exterior wall murals, sculptures etc.).

1.1.4 Utilize spaces between buildings as pedestrian passage-ways to parking areas located behind buildings.

1.2 Horizontal and Vertical Alignments

The Main Street of Downtown Stony Plain is largely lined by buildings sharing similar facade components which create a strong horizontal alignment with a secondary vertical orientation. The majority of buildings are similar in width and height. The "heritage or traditional" style street furniture that has been installed along Main Street and other areas of the downtown reinforce the existing horizontal alignment through the contribution of continuity.

Objective: *To create visual and physical unity and harmony through maintaining a similarity in height and width among neighbouring buildings.*

Recommended Approach

1.2.1 Align horizontal elements on neighbouring buildings (e.g. storefronts, window sills, signage, cornices, transom windows, awnings, etc.).

1.2.2 Maintain the floor-to-ceiling heights which predominate throughout the Downtown area.

1.2.3 Retain the proportions of doors and windows and the spaces between which presently prevail along Main Street.

1.2.4 Maintain the horizontal orientation of buildings along Main Street.

1.2.5 Continue the concrete and tile surface sidewalk treatment, which has been installed on both sides of Main Street, throughout the downtown area.

1.2.6 Installation of street furniture, hardware and lamp standards should continue throughout the downtown area and be consistent in style and materials.

1.2.7 Frame off-street parking areas with regularly maintained fences or screening vegetation (i.e. trees or shrubs).

1.2.8 Use traditional profile awnings, fixed or retractable, to reinforce the general horizontal alignment of the streetscape.

1.3 Building Form and Massing

Single storey buildings form the majority of buildings in downtown Stony Plain with a minor number of two storey buildings. This sets a horizontal visual alignment along Main Street, with the two storey buildings providing an element of contrast.

Objective: *To encourage physical unity between buildings within each block.*

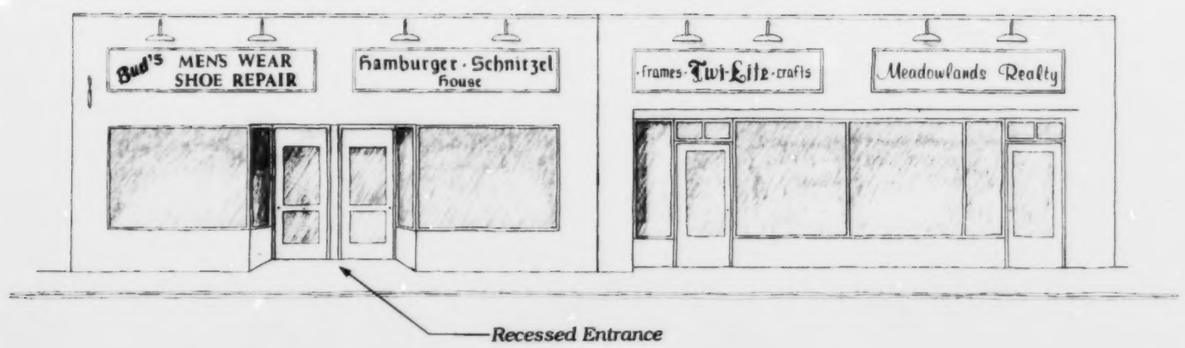
Recommended Approach

1.3.1 Buildings should be of similar height, width and roofline as that which is prevalent in the Downtown. New buildings should be of a height consistent with neighbouring buildings. Roof line variations are acceptable to allow 1 or 2 storey buildings to be constructed side by side.

1.3.2 Storefronts should be of similar height and width. Wider facades should retain a structural bay width that is similar to prevailing bay widths.

TOWN OF STONY PLAIN

TYPICAL IMPROVEMENTS TO COMMERCIAL BUILDING FACADES



These two buildings relate well to each other due to the similarity of their form and massing. Their facades work well in the downtown because they possess many features of the traditional storefront.

They offer a good example of how several different types of businesses can be accommodated in a storefront location without compromising basic storefront characteristics.

The design enhancement approach for these buildings is based on the need for greater interest and storefront/business individuality.

UNITY

Retain the existing storefront components:

- *recessed entries*
- *pilasters*
- *low kickplates*
- *good symmetry*
- *large display window area*

INTEREST/IDENTITY

Paint window and door trim in different but complementary storefront colours to accentuate business individuality within the structural unity of the overall building.

Signage that states its message simply and in a few words will improve business identification and image. Custom designed signboard-style signs with hooded floodlamps are preferable.

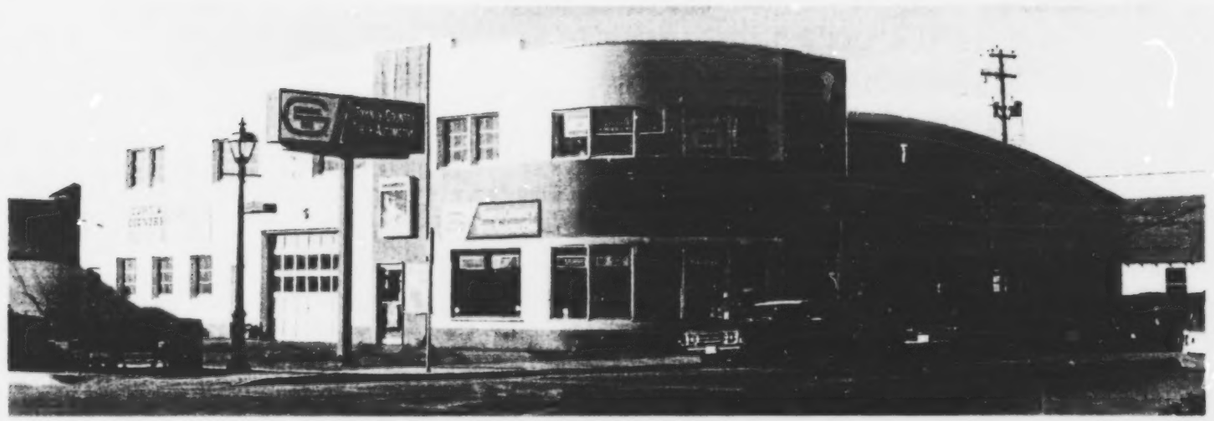
Signage featuring a horizontal alignment and located above each storefront will contribute positively to effective business identification/image and storefront appearance.

The use of small-scale, custom-designed projecting signs, as secondary signage, identifies a business to pedestrians approaching from either side. An existing example is the "boot" sign, located on the north pilaster of the "Bud's Men's Wear" storefront.

Recessed lighting should be located above the entrance areas.

TOWN OF STONY PLAIN

TYPICAL IMPROVEMENTS TO COMMERCIAL BUILDING FACADES



The front portion (facade) of this building features the Streamline Moderne style of architecture which was popular in Alberta during the 1930s and 1940s.

However, changes have been made over the years that have weakened the architectural character of this building. Low to moderate cost improvements, which can be part of general maintenance, can be used to restore the Streamline Moderne character to this facade.

These improvements would reflect a "restoration" design approach.

UNITY

- *Remove applied vertical wood siding from entrance area and west side of facade.*
- *Remove the present variety of signage from the building facade.*
- *Apply new stucco surface or repair cracks and paint stucco surface in traditional white colour.*
- *Apply horizontal running "speedlines" on the upper parapet area and the area above street level windows and doors.*
- *The parapet flash capping, door, window and other trim should be painted the same colour as that applied to the speedlines.*

INTEREST/IDENTITY

The white stuccoo (painted stucco) background colour should be highlighted with red, black or dark green, for the parapet capping, window and door trim, door detailing, speedlines, etc. No more than two complementary colours should be used.

Install a rounded flat entrance canopy to the customer entrance.

Apply painted signage to the rounded corner area of the facade for maximum exposure. The style of lettering should be consistent with the Streamline Moderne Architectural Style.

Install hooded floodlamps to illuminate the sign.

Install recessed lighting above the customer entrance.

2.0 GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS

2.1 Storefront Components

A major strength of Stony Plain's Main Street is the street and pedestrian orientation of its building storefronts. The one and two storey buildings that line Main Street are of a human scale and are built up to the front property line. They are therefore conducive to pedestrian traffic. This allows a business the opportunity to use storefront display windows and the entrance area as important merchandise display areas.

Storefronts oriented to street pedestrian use
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

Objective: *To support sidewalk activities as well as to foster pedestrian interest.*

Recommended Approach

2.1.1 Buildings on Main Street, and in particular their storefronts, should continue to be of a human scale and oriented to the pedestrian.

2.1.2 Storefronts should be built up to the front property line or sidewalk and in no case should be recessed more than 0.9 m (3 ft).

2.1.3 In the case of single storey buildings the street level area should be kept relatively transparent in comparison with the upper area above or, in the case of two storey buildings, the upper storey.

2.1.4 Display windows should be as large as practical with minimum partitioning at eye level. Window sills should be approximately 1 meter (1.6 ft) above the level of the sidewalk, thereby allowing for a kickplate panel below.

2.1.5 In two storey buildings upper windows should reflect the repetitive, vertical pattern along the street.

2.1.6 The use of recessed entries should be continued to provide shelter to pedestrians, emphasize the entry, and extend the amount of window display.

2.1.7 The following storefront elements should be maintained where possible:

- thin structural members;
- piers or columns;
- recessed entries;
- large display windows with kickplate panels below;
- transom windows finished in clear, translucent or opaque material;
- awnings, fixed or retractable;

2.2 Building Facade Improvements

A building facade is the public face of a commercial building. It is important that it be designed in a manner that is attractive and inviting to those passing by. The storefront should function as a visually integrated element of the overall facade. On single storey buildings the storefront will most often occupy the whole facade. On larger buildings, two storey or more, the storefront section will usually occupy the area extending from the base of the building to below the second storey window sills.

Objective: *To create a proportionally balanced building facade that will accommodate current commercial uses.*

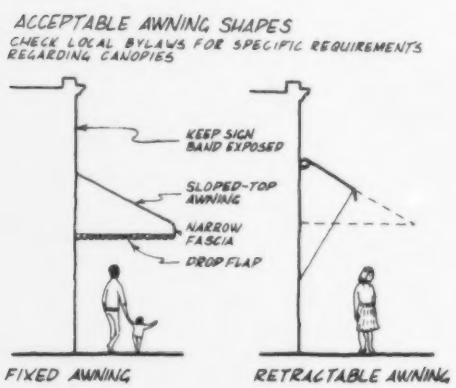
Recommended Approach

2.2.1 Renovations or repairs to a building facade or other exposed exterior walls should be carried out in a manner consistent with the overall appearance of the building.

2.2.2 The relationship between the ground floor and the upper floor should be maintained by, for example, the vertical alignment of the storefront structural members with key features of the upper floor.

2.2.3 Various parts and elements of the facade should be treated in a manner which creates a balanced whole.

2.2.4 Traditional profile, fixed or retractable awnings with a skirt and utilizing high quality canvas (or acrylic), solid or striped material, should be used where possible to reinforce the traditional unified, horizontal alignment of streetscape elements.



2.3 Building Materials

Clapboard was the predominant building material used for cladding buildings during the 1895 - 1920 construction "boom" period in Stony Plain, with some brick and fieldstone construction. In the 1930s and later, stucco exteriors were used extensively on new buildings, additions, and to cover older wood clapboard facades. In recent years, brick, stucco, plastic and metal cladding materials have been used in new construction and for facade renovation. As part of the public sector streetscape improvements, "heritage" style street furniture and hardware, featuring black metal and varnished wood finishes, have been installed in parts of the Downtown.

Objective: *To achieve consistency and visual harmony through the use of traditional and appropriate newer building materials.*

Recommended Approach

2.3.1 Structures of historical interest should be identified, preserved and restored or renovated, using original materials where possible.

2.3.2 Materials similar in scale, appearance, texture and colour to existing and traditionally predominant materials should be used, e.g. red brick, horizontally laid painted wood (clapboard), smooth surfaced stucco, round faced field stone, etc.

2.3.3 Existing finishes should be continued, retained or restored, where possible (e.g. sidewalk surface treatment, street furniture finishes, wood, brick or stone facade finishes).

2.4 Detailing

Detailing includes surface finishes on walls, parapets, sills, piers etc. and other structural elements, as well as decorative and stylistic features which are important to the enhancement of the overall character of a building. Most existing building facades in downtown Stony Plain do not display a complex level of architectural detailing. Those that do should receive special attention.

Objective: *To retain the richness of detail which contributes to pedestrian interest and the attractiveness of a building facade.*

Recommended Approach

2.4.1 As many of the original facade components, details and decorative features as possible, should be retained.

2.4.2 Alterations should not involve extensive change to the original facade and original features should be retained, even when covered over.

The wood canopy is not in keeping with the original character of the building
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

2.4.3 Where parts or materials must be replaced, materials which are similar in colour, texture, proportions, dimensions and design may be substituted for the original.

2.4.4 Traditional building facade materials for new building facades should be considered: painted wood, stucco, brick or round faced fieldstone.

2.4.5 Damaged components or details should be repaired, rather than replaced, and features which are not in keeping with the original character of the building should not be applied.

2.5 Storefront Windows, Entrances and Doors

The well designed storefront should function as an effective marketing tool. The proportions and location of storefront windows, doors and entrance should form a composite that creates an inviting and attractive atmosphere. Traditional storefront entrances were often symmetrically located and deep-set to provide weather protection and to increase display window exposure to shoppers. Display windows are a major merchandising tool for pedestrian/street oriented storefronts. Upper storey openings were most often vertically aligned, single hung sash windows, but many of these have been replaced with windows featuring a horizontal orientation, or, in other cases, filled in. The storefronts and building facades that line Stony Plain's Main Street present two types of windows: (1) display windows; (2) vertically aligned upper storey windows.

In Stony Plain there are several buildings that house two business establishments at street level with separate entrance doors. In some buildings the entrance doors are located centrally, whereas other buildings feature entrance doors at either end of the building facade.

Objective: *To establish a rhythmic pattern of openings and spaces along the length of a block and to contribute to pedestrian interest and the character of the facade.*

Recommended Approach

2.5.1 Maintain original entrance elements and configuration. Where changes have occurred, reconstruction should resemble the original door system.

2.5.2 In cases where a window must be filled in, preserve the character of the windows by retaining the indentation, frame, sills, mullions, etc. in order to continue the rhythmic pattern of the openings.

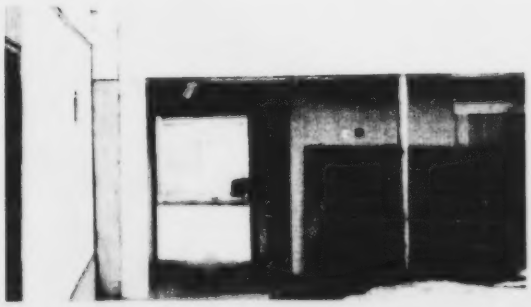
2.5.3 New windows should, if possible, fit the existing opening and be the same shape and type of window as that is being replaced.

2.5.4 Where possible, retain the original storefront and secondary doors. When required, new doors should fit the existing opening and be the same colour, shape and style of door that is being replaced.

2.5.5 Use only commercial grade doors, not residential, for storefront doors.

2.6 Side and Rear Walls

Viewable side and rear building walls should be integrated with, and complement, a building's facade. Increased development of public parking lots at the rear of buildings will require the upgrading of rear walls.



This walkway area should be enhanced
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

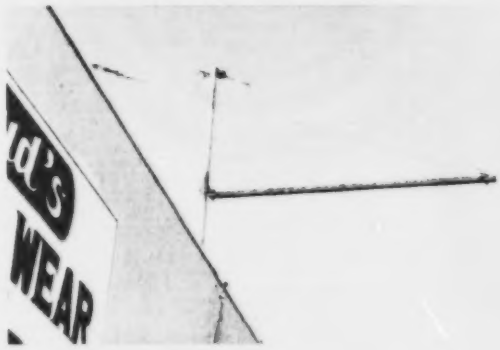
Objective: *To integrate a building's facade with the rest of the building and to make all of a building, not just the front walls (facades), more attractive.*

Recommended Approach

2.6.1 Extend a simplified version of the facade treatment to other exposed walls, through the use of coordinated colour schemes and materials.

2.6.2 Avoid a "shirtfront" effect by avoiding sharp contrast between front and exposed rear and side walls.

2.6.3 Remove additions and add-ons, not in use, so that they do not detract from the appearance of a wall (e.g. such as TV antennas, lean-to entries, pipes, electrical wiring, signs, etc.).



Unused items like this are unsightly and should be removed
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

2.7 Exterior Wall Murals

The ongoing programme of locating exterior murals, featuring cultural history scenes, on the sidewalls of Downtown buildings has been a significant move toward adding interest to the Downtown.

Objective: *To create interest in the Downtown through the visual interpretation of the community's history.*

Recommended Approach

2.7.1 Exterior wall murals should be located so that they are readily viewable and not subject to blockage by new development or parked vehicles.

2.7.2 Exterior wall murals should, where possible, portray events or activities, relating to the Town's history.

2.7.3 Various artists should be commissioned to apply these murals which should vary in their depiction of time period and subject matter.

2.8 Finishes and Maintenance

In most cases Downtown buildings are long paid for. They are sturdy and constructed of enduring materials. It makes economic sense to work to improve and consolidate existing buildings. Good maintenance is preventative and cost-effective in the long term. This is a minimal approach and only minor work to prevent further deterioration is normally considered. This may involve simple repainting or repair of the broken items, such as windows, or other items, that could cause further deterioration.

Objective: *To maximize the contribution which finishes and maintenance can make to the appearance of facades and buildings.*

Recommended Approach

2.8.1 Materials and finishes similar to the original in terms of colour, texture, scale and dimensions, should be used.

2.8.2 The use of large expanses of obviously modern materials, such as aluminum, plastic and reflective glass, should be avoided or kept to a minimum on older buildings.

2.8.3 The choice of colour schemes should involve a consideration of colours used on adjacent buildings, colours appropriate to specific architectural styles and the original colour scheme of the facade.

2.8.4 Colour schemes used on any one building should be limited to two or three colours. Co-ordinated, contrasting or complementary colours should be used to highlight details such as mouldings, brackets, cornices, window frames, etc.

2.8.5 Water and/or chemical washes are recommended for the cleaning of masonry only after patch tests on an unobtrusive part of a wall are completed. Avoid sandblasting as a method of cleaning masonry or fieldstone since this method erodes the impervious surface of masonry and can lead to an increase in the rate of deterioration.

2.8.6 Cap flashing and other forms of weather protection for walls and architectural detailing should be maintained in good condition.

2.9 New and Infill Construction

The design of new commercial buildings should express contemporary taste and be compatible with existing buildings. Ordinarily, the design of new buildings should not directly "imitate" traditional downtown architectural styles. The Town's Cultural Theme allows for a broad selection of design ideas. New buildings can use contemporary materials and technologies in a way that contributes to streetscape continuity at a functional and visual level.

Objective: *To design new structures which enhance the appearance of both the old and new buildings in the downtown.*

Recommended Approach

2.9.1 The design of new development will fit in best and be least disturbing to the streetscape if it visually relates to existing buildings through the use of

similar forms, mass, height, proportions and scale.

2.9.2 New development should feature the use of materials, colours, textures, details and signs which are similar to, and compatible with, those of adjacent buildings.

2.9.3 Mirrored or smoked glass cladding and windows should be avoided since the type and form of these building materials is not suited to the prevailing architecture in the Downtown area and its use often results in blank, uninteresting areas along the street that disrupt retail continuity.

2.9.4 Where similar forms and features are used to integrate new buildings into the existing streetscape they should be used consistently throughout the design of the building and in accord with their use on existing structures.

2.9.5 Where the design of a new building is intended to contrast with existing ones, care should be taken to ensure that the new building does not overwhelm or dominate neighbouring buildings in terms of streetscape presence.

2.9.6 Contrast in the design of a new building can be a positive factor if based on only one design aspect, such as scale or size. All other aspects of the design should complement the neighbouring buildings.

3.0 SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

Signage is of primary importance in streetscape design, and is of particular importance to the physical improvement of Stony Plain's Downtown. Effective signage will usually do three things. It will (1) identify a business by indicating its location to customers; (2) describe a business by providing indicators regarding the type and quality of goods and services being provided; and (3) advertise the business by drawing attention to it and its desired "image".

Signs were traditionally located above the storefront and below the second floor windows. They were often contained within a signband or decorative street level cornice area in order to be easily read from the street. To allow easy reading from down the street, projecting signs were often used. In recent years, projecting signs have been strictly regulated to limit visual clutter created by their increasing size.

Large painted signs on the side of downtown buildings were common in the past, as was window lettering, on both ground and upper floor windows. During the 1930s to 1950s, neon tube signage appeared in Stony Plain, as it did in other communities across the country.

Good example of a "Tube" neon sign still in use
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

Signs have evolved over time and few examples of traditional sign styles exist in Stony Plain's Downtown area. The mass production "neon box" type of signage overwhelmingly dominates today as does the "bubble canopy" type of signage. The latter may still function to reduce interior heat buildup in buildings but it rarely provides pedestrians on the street with protection from inclement weather. Some of the large bubble canopy signs are out of scale with the buildings they are placed on or with the overall scale of downtown development and are more suited to vehicle-oriented commercial areas.

Poorly located signage, signage clutter and ineffective sign design exist in the Downtown. These conditions should be corrected as an important part of developing a high quality downtown environment.

3.1 Sign Selection and Placement

Objective: *To clearly identify a business, institution or establishment in a manner which complements both the business and the architectural character of a building facade or storefront.*

Recommended Approach

3.1.1 The choice of size, shape, proportions, colour, material and placement of a sign should be guided by an analysis of the facade to determine where a sign would best fit.

3.1.2 The scale and balance between a sign and the building facade/storefront, should be maintained so that neither one overwhelms the other.

3.1.3 Signs in the Downtown should be designed to appeal to slower moving pedestrian traffic and do not require high impact, high visibility features.

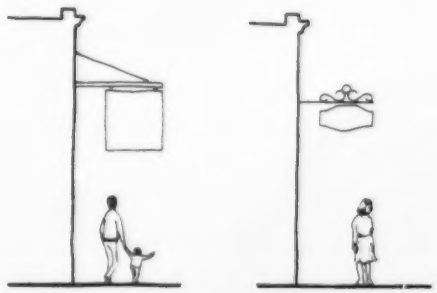
3.1.4 Signs should be located in the general area of the storefront and where they would be readily viewable by their target groups. There are four locations well suited to downtown commercial buildings, each with its own target group:

(a) Signboards, rectangular in shape, and placed flat against the building above the storefront windows are aimed at pedestrians across the street and slow moving vehicular traffic.

(b) Window Signs, which are painted on the inside of the display window are targeted at the pedestrians across the street and those passing along the sidewalk adjacent to the building.

(c) Projecting or Hanging signs, should be of the "specialty type", placed perpendicular to the store front and low enough to be seen by pedestrians approaching along the sidewalk. Subsection 15 of Section 54 "Signs, General Regulations", of the Land Use By-Law, should be amended to relax location distances between projecting signs and limit their size.

PROJECTING SIGNS



TYPICAL SIGN SPECIALTY SIGN

(d) Awning signs, can be applied to the face, valance or sides of an awning (or canopy), and accordingly their target group depends on the location of the sign on the awning.

TRADITIONAL PROFILE AWNINGS PROVIDE FOR SIGNAGE ON FRONT & SIDES

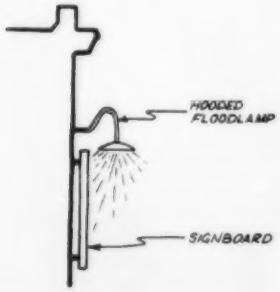
3.1.5 Primary signs should be the flat signboard type. Secondary signs, if required, should be smaller in size.

3.1.6 Extra signs should be removed and avoided because they contribute more to visual clutter than to identifying a business.

3.1.7 Second-floor business signs can be effectively located on second floor windows, as well as street level entrance and signboard areas.

3.1.8 Sign illumination should be provided by flood lamp systems, located above, below, or to the sides, of a sign.

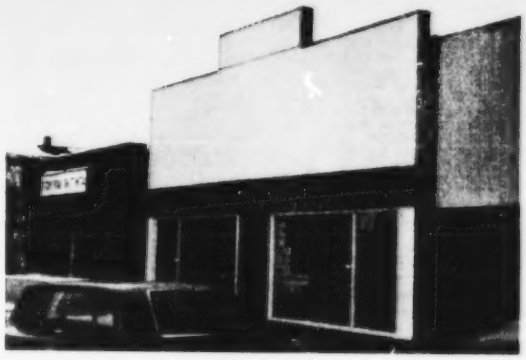
SIGNBOARDS AND LIGHTING



3.2 Sign Design

In choosing a sign, a merchant attracts customers, invites them to enter and do business and implies a certain standard of prices, goods, and services. Signs convey these vital messages both subtly and overtly. They speak not only with words, but with colours, symbols and shapes. To be effective, a sign need not be expensive, but it must be well designed and well placed. Signs that are well located on a building's facade strengthen a community's architectural image and the effectiveness of the sign itself. Effective signage can be a crucial factor in business success.

Objective: *To clearly identify businesses, institutions and other establishments while avoiding signage clutter.*



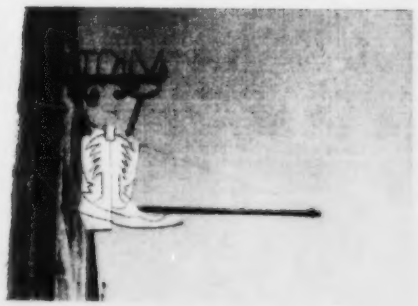
Absence of identifying signage on building facade detracts from business (1991)
Source: E.M.R.P.C.

Recommended Approach

3.2.1 For maximum clarity, the amount of information on a sign should be limited. Words should be spaced to be readable, with about 60 per cent of a sign board devoted to lettering and the remainder as background.

3.2.2 Lettering on signs should be simple. Mixing the size of type on a sign can add emphasis but mixing different typefaces tends to be very confusing and should be avoided.

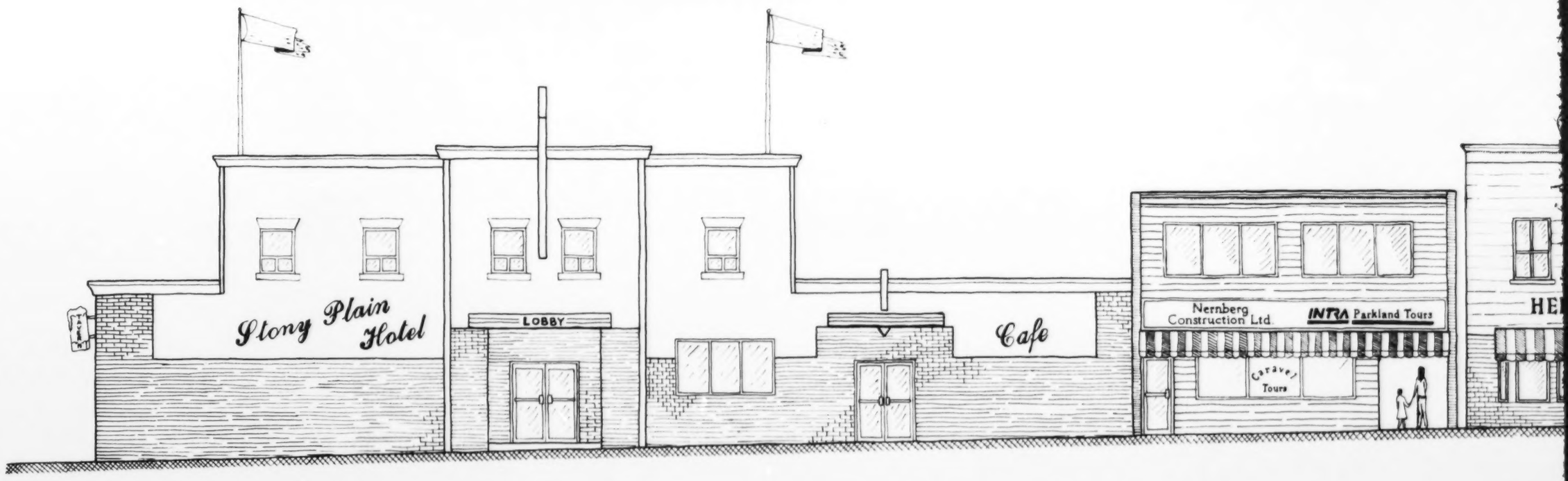
3.2.3 Mass-produced signs with product logos should be avoided since they tend to promote the product, instead of the business, and often are out of scale and character with their location.



A local specialty sign
Source: E.M.R.P.C

TOWN OF STONY PLAIN

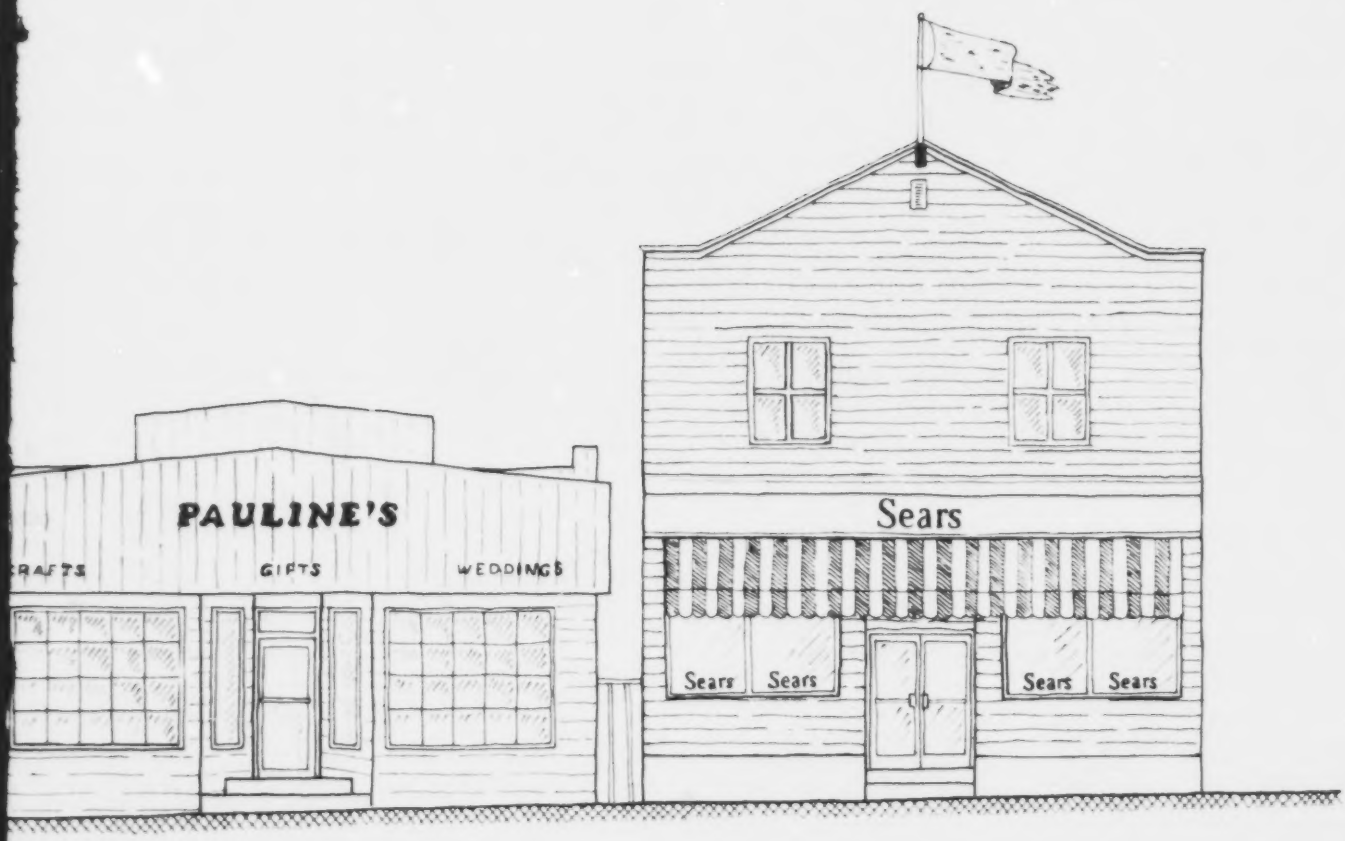
Main St
50 Ave



TY

Main Street - East Facade
50 Avenue to 51 Avenue

TYPICAL IMPROVEMENTS TO COMMERCIAL BUILD



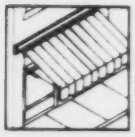
ERCIAL BUILDING FACADES

GLOSSARY

The following definitions have been adapted, in part, from *Planning and Design for Commercial Facade Improvements* prepared by Roger du Toit Architects for the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs 1985.

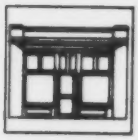
Arcade: an arched passage, which may be free-standing, attached to a wall, or running between or through buildings; if columns are used to support the arches, it is often called a colonnade; some arcades have glass and steel arched roofs.

Arch: a curved structure used at the top of doorways, windows, arcades etc.; can be used to carry the weight of walls to either side of openings in walls.



Awning: an adjustable, roof-like covering fitted over windows, doors, etc. to provide shelter from the sun, rain and wind, and for decorative and advertising purposes.

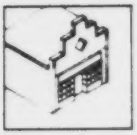
Bargeboard: a decorated board which hangs from the projected end of a roof to screen the projecting roof timbers.



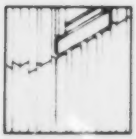
Bay: a vertical division of a facade or a structural division of a building, marked by column spacing, roof compartments, windows, etc.

Bay Window: an angular or curved projection of a building front (facade). If curved, is also called a bow window; if on an upper floor only, is called an oriel window.

Beam: a horizontal structural member, usually wood, steel or concrete, which supports vertical building loads.



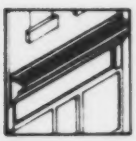
Boomtown (facade): a front wall that extends above a roof of a building, and masks the structure with a more imposing facade.



Cladding (Siding): a protective surfacing material (wood, aluminum, etc.) applied over the structural members and sheathing.

Clapboard: overlapping horizontal boards covering a stick-framed wall; the boards are wedge shaped in section and have a thinner upper edge.

Corbel: masonry projecting from a wall face, either to support other projections above (such as cornices, window hoods, oriel windows, etc.) or for purely ornamental reasons.



Cornice: an ornamental moulding located on the outside walls of commercial buildings; cornices can top the entire facade (Building Cornice) and/or the storefront (Storefront Cornice); is used to throw or direct water away from the wall below and to visually cap a wall or section of a wall.

Dormer: a gable shaped projection usually containing a window and located on a sloping roof.

Drop Flap: the overhanging section of an awning, sometimes used for advertising.

Eaves: the lower edge of a roof which projects beyond the face of a wall and directs water away from the wall.

Elevation: a drawing showing an external face of a building.

Entablature: a horizontal moulding in classical architecture, which rests upon columns or pilasters.

Flashing: a protective building device, usually a thin impervious shell material, used to cover open joints in exterior construction to prevent water penetration and/or to intercept and direct away water.

Gable: any basically triangular-shaped, upper part of a building wall, usually under a pitched roof; sometimes upper walls topped with stepped parapets are referred to as gables or stepped gables.

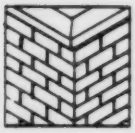
Grade: ground level at the outside wall of a building.

Infill: new building(s) constructed on an empty or cleared site situated between or adjacent to existing buildings.

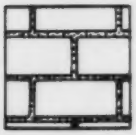
Keystone: a wedge-shaped block in the top centre of a masonry arch, or similar elements used as ornaments above doors and windows.

Kickplate: the rectangular areas below the store-front window sill and the base of the building facade. Often highlighted with decorative trim or panelling.

Lintel: a horizontal structural member (beam) that supports the load over an opening, such as a door or a window.

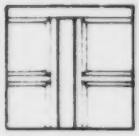


Masonry: bricks, stone, concrete block, or similar building materials, or combinations of these, bonded together with mortar to form a wall, pier or similar mass.

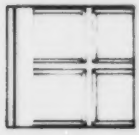


Mortar: the binding agent in masonry construction, consisting of prescribed proportions of cementing agents, fine aggregate and water.

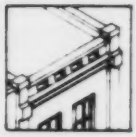
Moulding: a shaped band or strip of decoration indented to add outline or contour; can be made from many materials.



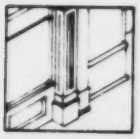
Mullion: a vertical member dividing window frames.



Muntin: a small, slender secondary vertical or horizontal framing member within a sash frame which carries and separates panes of glass.



Parapet: a portion of a wall that projects above the roof.

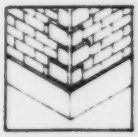


(Storefront) Pier: a rectangular or square structural masonry support between openings; at times, the outside facade of a party wall.

(Storefront) Pilaster: a vertical strip projecting slightly from a wall, usually in the form of a half column or half pillar; can be structural or purely ornamental.

Pitched Roof: a roof with two slopes which meet at a central ridge or, less commonly, any roof with a surface slope greater than 10 degrees.

Post: any vertical member supporting a vertical and/or lateral load.

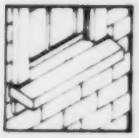


Quoins: projecting block of stone or brick used to accentuate the corners of a building.

Sash: a frame that holds glass in a window.

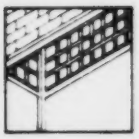
Siding: see Cladding.

Signband, Signboard: a prominent exterior display surface, used for identification and advertising and located between the storefront window and the parapet area, cornice or upper windows of a two storey building.



Sill: a horizontal bottom member of a window or door frame.

Stucco: a textured plaster finish, traditionally composed of portland cement, lime, sand and water.



Transom Window: an operable or fixed window above door(s) and/or windows.

Turret: a tower, usually round or polygonal and built out from a building corner.

Urban Design: the arrangement or composition, in a community, of forms (landscape features, etc.) and spaces (streets, squares, parks etc.) based on principles related to visual order, environmental conditions, social requirements and economic feasibility.

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